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ABSTRACT

The engine that drives the America 2000 strategy is the Community Challenge--a nationwide movement designed to help America move itself, community by community, toward the six National Education Goals. A community can do four things to become an America 2000 community: (1) adopt the six national education goals; (2) develop a communitywide strategy to achieve them; (3) design a report card to measure progress; and (4) plan for and support a new American School. This booklet contains questions that communities might ask about planning a strategy, and offers a starting place to evaluate their progress toward becoming an America 2000 community. (LMI)

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AMERICA 2000

ISSUES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AMERICA 2000 Communities:

The Four-Part Challenge

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Introduction

AMERICA 2000 is a bold strategy—a nationwide crusade—to help America move itself, community by community, toward the six National Education Goals established by the President and the Governors in 1990. It is a way for every community to look at how things are now, decide how they ought to be, and figure out how to get there. AMERICA 2000 is about communities bringing about real change to reach the goals locally. It's about communities doing it their way, with government and others lending support.

The engine that drives the AMERICA 2000 strategy is the Community Challenge. The President has challenged every neighborhood, town, and city in the nation to become an AMERICA 2000 Community by doing four things:

1. Adopt the six National Education Goals;
2. Develop a community-wide strategy to achieve them;
3. Design a report card to measure progress; and,
4. Plan for and support a New American School.

As of today, 44 states and two territories are organizing their own STATE 2000 efforts, and at least 1,400 communities all across the country are in various stages of organizing to become AMERICA 2000 Communities. These communities are using the AMERICA 2000 framework to come up with their own way to start a revolution in education. They are thinking through what it means to become an AMERICA 2000 Community.

To help, the U.S. Department of Education published the booklet, *AMERICA 2000 Communities: Getting Started*, that describes in detail the different ways in which communities are responding to the four-part Community Challenge.

The following pages contain questions that build on the ideas in the *Getting Started* booklet. They might be a good starting place for communities to evaluate their progress in becoming AMERICA 2000 communities.

1. Adopt the six National Education Goals....

Are the six National Education Goals central to your COMMUNITY 2000 effort? Of course, a community can set other goals or "localize" the national ones, but widely accepted goals that chart an ambitious and comprehensive vision for the year 2000 make up the core of any AMERICA 2000 Community.

- ☑ Is your COMMUNITY 2000 effort led by a broad-based steering committee representative of the entire community? Does your steering committee include, where possible, individuals from *at least* six key groups: parents, business leaders, teachers and school leaders, political leaders (of both parties), civic organizations, and the media?

- ☑ Does your steering committee consist of leaders who can make things happen, leaders who are actually driving the effort? A steering committee that is ceremonial, one that doesn't "own" the COMMUNITY 2000 effort, probably isn't enough.

- ☑ Have task forces or goal teams been created to develop specific recommendations about how your community might reach its goals? In some communities, the steering committee has created one task force or team for each of the National Education Goals; in others, the steering committee has established task forces or teams to address issues that cut across the goals (parent involvement, for instance).

- ☑ Has there been a COMMUNITY 2000 kickoff where the steering committee invited your community's acceptance of the AMERICA 2000 Community Challenge?

- ☑ Have many people throughout your community—not just educators or the members of the steering committee—publicly committed themselves to helping do whatever it takes to reach the goals your community has set for itself?

2. Develop a community-wide strategy to achieve them....

Do you have a community-wide strategy, a written compact, that includes a mission statement, your community's own definition of each goal, year-by-year benchmarks for moving itself toward the goals, and a detailed description of what organizations, institutions, and individuals must do to help your community reach its goals?

- ☑ Does your strategy include an assessment of where the community is today, in relation to where it wants to be? Does it assess your

community's current performance in relation to its goals? Does the assessment include efforts already underway that may be moving the community toward its goals? Does your strategy include efforts to improve achievement in English, mathematics, science, history, and geography, as well as other subjects such as civics, foreign languages, physical education, the arts, or economics?

- ☑ Does your strategy build on efforts to improve student achievement that are already underway? Does it outline changes to make those efforts more effective in helping your community reach its goals? Does it describe what isn't being done that needs to be done?

- ☑ Does your strategy describe in concrete terms the steps that must be taken—and who must do what—to get your community from where it is today to where it wants to be by the year 2000?

- ☑ Instead of simply expecting everyone to try a little harder at the same things in the same ways, does your strategy reflect in-depth rethinking of the roles various groups ought to play, including groups such as parents, teachers, students, school leaders, businesses, media, senior citizens, civic organizations, churches and synagogues, police, museums and libraries, labor, health professionals, colleges and universities, and government agencies?

- ☑ Is your strategy community-wide? Is it the hard-fought product of the entire community thinking together about how to transform its schools and reach its goals?

- ☑ Does your strategy include a communications plan to build commitment throughout the community to risk-taking, fundamental changes, and the hard work it will take to implement the community-wide strategy? Does the communications plan include elements intended to help change the way people think and act when it comes to education?

3. Design a report card to measure results....

Has your community designed a report card to measure, year by year, how well it implements its strategy and how much progress it has made toward the goals?

- ☑ Does your strategy include a first report card comprised of baseline

data—all the available information on where the community is in relation to the its goals? Does it describe what additional information needs to be gathered to measure the community's progress?

- ☑ Will the report card help your community determine—at least annually—whether organizations, institutions, and individuals did what they said they would do?

- ☑ Will the report card help determine whether your strategy, as implemented over a year, has moved the community toward its goals? .Will it help your community sort out what's working and what's ineffective?

- ☑ Is there a plan for your community's report card to be widely publicized each year, giving the community an opportunity to fine-tune its strategy and renew commitment to its goals?

4. Plan for and support a New American School....

Does your community have a written description of its plan for at least one break-the-mold New American School?

- ☑ Does your description explain how various education elements, both inside and outside the New American School, will be different from those in and around traditional schools—elements that include expectations for student performance, school governance, curricula, student assessment, teacher learning, parent involvement, community involvement, and others?

- ☑ Does it identify an existing school or other learning environment for a New American School?

- ☑ Does the description build on your community-wide strategy?

- ☑ Does it identify obstacles, including rules and regulations, that might stand in the way of creating your New American Schools?